

Message Text

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 SAM-01

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O R 041535Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8130

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

USMISSION GENEVA

USCONSUL JERUSALEM 7066

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR PINT IS EG

SUBJECT: SEPTEMBER 3 KNESSET DEBATE ON INTERIM AGREEMENT

REF: TEL AVIV 5575

SUMMARY: VOTING ON INTERIM AGREEMENT AT SEPT 3
KNESSET SESSION FOLLOWED EXPECTED LINES. RABIN
IN HIS STATEMENT HIGHLIGHTED CONTRACTUAL AND PUBLIC
NATURE OF AGREEMENT, STRESSED POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE
OF US INVOLVEMENT, AND CLAIMED THAT ISRAEL IS NOW
STRONGER MILITARILY AND POLITICALLY. IN
STATEMENTS OPPOSING THE AGREEMENT, BOTH OEGIN AND DAYAN ACCUSED
GOVERNMENT OF BREAKING PROMISE NOT TO RELINQUISH PASSES AND
ABU RODEIS WITHOUT NON-BELLIGERENCY COMMITMENT FROM
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EGYPT. KNESSET DEBATE TURNED OUT TO BE LESS STORMY THAN PREDICTED.
DAYAN'S OPPOSITION HAS ISOLATED HIM IN HIS PARTY AND PROBABLY
REDUCED HIS POLITICAL INFLUENCE, WHILE
RABIN'S HANDLING OF WHAT ALL REGARD AS DIFFICULT SITUATION APPEARS

TO HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY STRENGTHENED HIM BOTH AS LEADER OF HIS PARTY
AND AS PRIME MINISTER. END SUMMARY

1. VOTING IN SEPTEMBER 3 KNESSET SESSION AT WHICH APPROVAL WAS
GIVEN TO INTERIM AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT (70-43-7) CLOSELY FOLLOWED
EXPECTED LINES. THOSE OPPOSING INCLUDE THE ENTIRE LIKUD BLOC(38);
THE TWO LEADERS OF THE NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY YOUNG GUARD (HAMMER
AND BEN MEIR); AND THREE EX-RAFI MEMBERS OF THE LABOR PARTY
(EWJ,#BEN PORAT, AND HADAR). (NOTE: AMOS HADAR WAS FORMERLY
KNOWN AS AMOS HURWITZ.) THE SEVEN ABSTENTIONS INCLUDED ONE MEMBER
OF THE INDEPENDENT LIBERAL PARTY; TWO MEMBERS OF THE AGUDAT
RELIGIOUS FRONT; AND THE ENTIRE FOUR-MAN RAKAH DELEGATION.

2. RABIN STATEMENT. STATEMENT BY PM RABIN (FULL TEXT
SENT BY FBIS TA 031420) WAS BRIEF AND,
STATESMANLIKE, STRESSING THAT THE AGREEMENT WAS "SALIENTLY POL-
ITICAL" AND WAS THE RESULT OF A CONTINUITY OF POLICY DATING BACK TO
THE MEIR GOVERNMENT BUT AVOIDING ANY SUGGESTION THAT,
FROM THE ISRAELI VIEWPOINT, IT REPRESENTED PERFECTION.

3. POLITICAL CONTENT. IN MEETING OPPOSITION CLAIMS
THAT THE AGREEMENT LACKS POLITICAL CONTENT, RABIN
HIGHLIGHTED THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ACHIEVING FOR THE
FIRST TIME A "CONTRACTUAL AND PUBLIC AGREEMENT" WITH
EGYPT UNFETTERED BY REFERENCES TO UN RESOLUTIONS.

4. US ROLE. HE POINTED ALSO TO THE "POLITICAL
SIGNIFICANCE" OF THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE US IN THE
NEGOTIATING PROCESS AND IN THE AGREEMENT ITSELF,
BOTH "AT THE BILATERAL LEVEL AND IN THE GLOBAL CON-
TEXT". HE UNDERLINED HIS CONVICTION THAT THE "FULL
UNDERSTANDING" ACHIEVED WITH THE US WOULD
LEAD TO THE "CONTINUOUS ASSISTANCE" OF THE US IN
THE MILITARY SUPPLY FIELD AS WELL AS IN "HIGHLY
IMPORTANT POLITICAL SUBJECTS, DERIVING FROM INTERESTS
COMMON TO ISRAEL AND THE UNITED STATES IN THE REGIONAL
AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXTS". HE SPECIFIED THAT ISRAEL
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DID NOT RELINQUISH ABU RODEIS "BEFORE ASSURING SUPPLY
AND STORAGE OF THE FUEL REQUIRED BY ISRAEL."

5. ISRAELI SECURITY. ON ISRAEL'S ABILITY TO DEFEND
HERSELF FROM THE NEW LINES IN THE SINAI, RABIN AVOIDED
MENTIONING THE RELINQUISHED PASSES. RATHER, HE
REMINDED THE KNESSET THAT "THE BASIC CONSIDERATIONS
OF ISRAEL'S SECURITY ARE COMPLEX AND INTERCONNECTED,
AND THEY CANNOT BE RESTRICTED TO THE QUESTION OF
TERRITORY ALONE". HE THEN EMPHASIZED THAT IDF
DEPLOYMENT ON THE NEW LINE WILL BE "FIRM"; THAT THE
QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE STRENGTHENING OF THE

IDF HAS BEEN ASSURED; AND CONCLUDED THAT A "SOBER EVALUATION" SHOWS THAT ISRAEL WILL BE STRONGER POLITICALLY AND MILITARILY BECAUSE OF THE AGREEMENT.

6. AMERICAN CIVILIANS. RABIN EXPRESSED HIS HOPE THAT THE US CONGRESS WILL APPROVE THE PARTICIPATION OF AMERICAN CIVILIANS IN THE SINAI EARLY WARNING SYSTEM, POINTING OUT THAT THE US PROPOSAL LENDS "STABILITY AND CREDIBILITY" TO THE AGREEMENT BEYOND WHAT MIGHT BE EXPECTED OF UNEF. MEETING THE QUESTION OF POSSIBLE DANGER TO THE AMERICANS INVOLVED, RABIN SAID "IT IS ACCEPTED BY ISRAEL THAT NOT A SINGLE AMERICAN CITIZEN SHOULD BE IN THE AREA SHOULD FIGHTING FLARE UP THERE."

7. RELATIONS WITH EGYPT. CONCERNING THE FUTURE EVOLUTION OF RELATIONS WITH EGYPT, RABIN SAID HE AGREES WITH SADAT'S STATEMENT THAT THE AGREEMENT "REPRESENTS A TURNING POINT IN THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT". HE POINTED TO THE JOINT ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN COMMISSION PROVIDED FOR IN THE AGREEMENT AND TO THE JOINT USE OF THE ROAD ALONG THE GULF OF SUEZ TOON

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8131
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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
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AS HOLDING THE POSSIBILITY OF CREATING A NEW ATMOSPHERE WHICH HAS NOT BEEN POSSIBLE BEFORE DUE TO THE ABSENCE OF HUMAN CONTACT.

8. LIKUD LEADER BEGIN, IN THE MAJOR OPPOSITION STATEMENT, ACCUSED THE GOVERNMENT OF RENEGING ON ITS PROMISE NOT TO RELINQUISH THE PASSES AND ABU RODEIS UNTIL EGYPT AGREED TO NON-BELLIGERENCY. HE ALSO DENIED THAT RELATIONS WITH EGYPT WERE ENTERING A NEW PHASE, CLAIMING THAT THE 1949 ARMISTICE AGREEMENTS CONTAINED MUCH MORE OF POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE. HE SAID HE HAD NO FAITH IN THE EGYPTIAN COMMITMENT NOT TO ASSIST SYRIA UNLESS ISRAEL STATED HOSTILITIES, RECALLING THAT EGYPT TRIED TO PAINT ISRAEL AS THE AGGRESSOR IN THE YOM LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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9. RE RELATIONS WITH THE US, RABIN CLAIMED THAT THE AMERICAN COMMITMENT TO LOOK AFTER ISRAEL'S OIL NEEDS ONLY INCREASED ISRAELI RELIANCE ON THE US AND GAVE AMERICA GREATER LEVERAGE OVER ISRAEL IN THE FUTURE. HE ADDED THAT PRESIDENT FORD'S TELEPHONIC COMMITMENT TO SADAT THAT HE WOULD NOT ALLOW A DEADLOCK TO RESULT WAS TANTAMOUNT TO AN AMERICAN COMMITMENT TO PUT MORE PRESSURE ON ISRAEL FOR FURTHER WITHDRAWALS.

10. DAYAN (WHO SPENT LITTLE TIME IN THE KNESSET CHAMBER AND DID NOT HEAR RABIN'S STATEMENT) OPPOSED THE AGREEMENT ON THE FAMILIAR GROUNDS THAT IT LACKED A COMMITMENT TO NON-BELLIGERENCY, ON WHICH HE INSISTS AND FOR WHICH HE IS WILLING TO PAY THE COST OF MUCH DEEPER ISRAELI WITHDRAWALS. LIKE BEGIN, HE RECALLED THE GOVERNMENT PROMISE NOT TO WITHDRAW IN THE SINAI WITHOUT SUCH A NON-BELLIGERENCY COMMITMENT FROM EGYPT, AND REMINDED THE KNESSET THAT IT HAD BACKED THAT POSITION UNANIMOUSLY AT THE TIME. DAYAN CLAIMED THAT IN RETURN FOR ITS CONCESSIONS ISRAEL WAS RECEIVING ONLY AMERICAN COMPENSATION IN LIEU OF EGYPTIAN CONCESSIONS. HE TERMED THIS "GOOD FOR EGYPT BUT BAD FOR ISRAEL."

11. STATEMENTS IN SUPPORT OF THE AGREEMENT BY MOST OTHER MEMBERS TENDED TO FOCUS ON ARGUMENTS THAT THE AGREEMENT WAS THE BEST ISRAEL COULD GET AND IN ANY CASE WAS BETTER THAN WHAT WAS AVAILABLE IN

MARCH; THE REAL CHOICE WAS BETWEEN THIS AGREEMENT OR THE CONSEQUENCES

OF NO AGREEMENT; THE AGREEMENT PROVIDED A WAY OF TESTING EGYPTIAN INTENTIONS BEFORE CONSIDERING A NEXT STEP. ARGUMENTS ABOUT DIS-ADVANTAGES OF THE AGREEMENT FOCUSED AROUND 1) VIEW THAT IT WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT US/ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP AND 2) CONTINUED OPPOSITION TO GIVING UP TANGIBLE TERRITORY FOR ALLEGED, OR EVEN REAL, POLITICAL GAINS.

12. COMMENT: AS WAS TO BE EXPECTED, THERE WAS WIDE SPREAD PUBLIC INTEREST IN KNESSET DEBATE DESPITE FACT THAT POSITIONS OF ALL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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PARTIES AND MAJOR POLITICAL FIGURES WERE KNOWN IN ADVANCE AND PUBLIC, OVER PAST WEEKS, HAD BEEN EXPOSED TO ALMOST EVERY CONCEIVABLE ARGUMENT FOR AND AGAINST AGREEMENT. KNESSET SPEAKER MENTIONED TO POL COUNSELOR THAT THIS FACT MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO A MUCH MORE RESTRAINED AND SOBER DEBATE THAN HAD BEEN ANTICIPATED. THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE PLEASED AT THE SOLID SUPPORT IT RECEIVED FOR THE FRUIT OF ITS EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE WHAT MOST HERE REGARD AS THE BEST POSSIBLE AGREEMENT ATTAINABLE IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES. ANY PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENTS MUST ALSO INCLUDE A JUDGMENT THAT DAYAN'S OPPOSITION HAS LEFT HIM CONSPICUOUSLY ISOLATED IN HIS PARTY, AND, IT MAY PROVE, CORRESPONDINGLY LESS ABLE TO INFLUENCE GOVERNMENT'S POLITICAL DECISIONS. ON THE OTHER HAND, RABIN'S PERSONAL POSITION, BOTH AS PRIME MINISTER AND LEADER OF HIS PARTY, HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY STRENGTHENED AS THE RESULT OF HIS PERFORMANCE IN WHAT ALL ISRAELIS ARE CONVINCED WAS A VERY DIFFICULT SITUATION.
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